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TAGS: PREL PGOV ETRD KPAL

SUBJECT: PRE-GAERC DEMARCHE TO FRANCEREF:

¶A. STATE 13840

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (SBU): We shared reftel points February 7 with MFA DAS-equivalent fo CFSP Emmanuel Cohet, who responded with the following comments on February 12.

¶2. (C) Kosovo: Cohet stressed that while the GoF shares USG support for Ahtisaari, the MFA does not believe short delays in resolving the matte of Kosovo's final status should be problematic. He said it was more important to achieve "harmony," particularly with Russia, than to rigidly hold to a particular timetable. (Note: Separately, we understand from MFA DAS-equivalent Director for the Balkans that the French approach is to support Ahtisaari while deflecting Serbian maneuvering. End Note.)

¶3. (C) Serbia: Cohet said the MFA agrees that it is important to push Serbia to put in place a reform-minded government as soon as possible, and to push that new government to cooperate with the ICTY. He added that cooperation with the ICTY would remain a condition for Serbia's progress toward EU integration.

¶4. (C) Bosnia and Albania: Cohet said Bosnia and Albania will not be on the GAERC agenda.

¶5. (C) Israeli-Palestinian issues: Cohet said the MFA will continue its support for PA President Abbas. He added that the Mecca Accord signed February 8 could change the political landscape. The MFA is waiting to see both how the unity government is put into place and how other EU countries react. (Note: On February 9, the MFA's spokesperson, as well as the MFA DAS-equivalent Director for that Middle East region, stated that France would actively encourage its EU partners to follow the French line in welcoming the creation of a unity government. End Note.)

¶6. (C) Iran: According to Cohet, given that the GAERC had already announced its strong support for immediate implementation of UNSCR 1737 at its last (January 22) meeting, the GAERC was not likely to address the question of sanctions in its February 12-13 meeting. Rather, the debate will focus more broadly on a review of the EU's options for its diplomatic relations with Iran--specifically, on what issues and under what conditions should it agree to open a dialog with Tehran. Furthermore, Cohet said, the GAERC will explore how it can improve public diplomacy and outreach to the Iranian people. (Note: MFA Nonproliferation experts have emphasized to us that there has been no change in French policy. France remains open to dialogue with Iran, as long as Iran meets its international commitments to the IAEA and the UNSC. End Note.)

¶7. (C) Afghanistan: Cohet said that France shares the U.S. position tha the ESDP mission in Afghanistan should be clearly defined and closely coordinated. To that end, the GAERC will discuss the logistics and details of how to launch the police training mission.

¶8. (C) Sudan/Darfur: Cohet characterized the MFA position on Sudan as

"nearly identical" to that of the U.S.

¶9. (C) Somalia: Cohet said the GAERC will discuss the possibility of additional EU financial commitments to Somalia. He added that the GAER will consider inviting other countries outside the EU and AU to contribute funds.

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